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Elite Perception of Election as a “Do-Or-Die” Affair and Its Implications on the Conduct of Free and Fair Elections in Nigeria: the 2007 General Elections in Perspective

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Abstract:

The paper analyzes elite perception of election as a “do- or- die” affair in Nigeria and in addition examines the likely implications on the public clamour for conduct of free and fair elections. The focus is on the 2007 general elections, which by and large, were adjudged by both local and international election monitors as the worst elections ever conducted in the political history of Nigeria. This was due to unimaginable widespread malpractices that hallmarked the exercise. Using the post colonial state theory as a framework for analysis and secondary data, the paper applied content analysis in evaluating the actions and inactions of different stakeholders in the nation’s electoral process. In that regard, it finds that elite perception of election as a “do-or-die” affair affected the conduct of the 2007 general elections negatively and played significant roles in the poor rating of the elections. In order to restore the credibility of election as a competition in which there must be a winner and a loser, the paper recommends a holistic change of perception and attitude towards the conduct of election by the Nigerian elites. It thus advocates that this change in orientation is the most feasible way the conduct of democratic elections in Nigeria can comply with global best practices and be adjudged free and fair by all standards.

Keywords: Do-or die, Election, Elite, Nigeria and Perception

1. Introduction

Nigeria, which is Africa’s largest black population, is plagued with the challenge of conducting successful elections. Since its independence in 1960, it has been saddled with the burden of election mismanagement. Out of twelve national elections so far held in post-colonial Nigeria as of the time of this study in 2016, four were unsuccessful and stillborn, thus leading to reversals to authoritarian military rule and eight successful, thereby climaxing in the inauguration of elected governments to assume power. Among the successful elections, each had one form of problems or the other and somehow adjudged not free and fair. The failure of election management in Nigeria is not unconnected with the character of the Nigerian state which roots is traced to colonial legacy. It manifests in desperate struggle for power for personal and group aggrandizement rather than service to the people.

The nature of party politics and elite demeanor to a large extent, are perceived as complementary and sometimes mutually reinforcing factors that midwife the country’s electoral misfortune. Of the two, the influence of elite in the party and electoral process is most salient. Ayoade (2008:89) discussed the influence from two perspectives: the “money bags”, who use wealth acquired from public office to sponsor political processes in expectation of personal advantage, and the “god-fathers” who by their financial status or command of violence or mobilization of ethnic support rule by proxy and are shielded from the law by their protégés. The role of these political elites in Nigeria’s 4th republic politics has ushered in a new phase of party politics in the country where party machinery is a tool in the hands of elites to achieve personal advantages and the state has become synonymous with the ruling party (Aiyede, 2008).

Winning an election to any political office in Nigeria is a means to primitive accumulation of wealth and the political elites who draw support from the ethno-religious configuration of the nation do anything possible to achieve that. The struggle for power is therefore intense and at best, a “do- or- die” affair. The concept of “do-or-die” affair in this paper is meant to portray an attitude where the elites, those who by virtue of their education and/or political positions are in a position to determine the fate of others, perceive election as a warfare in which one must win at all cost in order to enjoy the spoils of office. This scenario is heightened by the fact that Nigeria practices a federal system which over centralizes power at the centre and usurps the powers of the constituent units. The version of federal system in Nigeria is an aberration; it poses danger to observance of jurisdictional boundary in the exercise of state’s power and creates tendency for elite rivalry and contestation to determine who influences authoritative allocation of values in the system. According to Ayoade (2008:89), Nigeria is a federal system that deprives its constituent units of power. It is also exploitative

and as a result, engenders an intense struggle for control of the soul of the nation at the centre. This over concentration of power at the centre is attributed to the twin issues of Nigeria's colonial heritage and its experience of prolonged military rule.

Apart from its federal structure, Nigeria also operates a presidential system of government, with a bicameral legislature (National Assembly) comprising of the upper chamber, Senate and a lower one, the House of Representatives. There are also the executive and the judicial arms of government. In addition, Nigeria operates a multi party system with 50 registered political parties as at 2007 when the general election which is the subject matter of this paper took place.

Nonetheless, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) manages the elections into the federal and state executive offices as well as representatives into the federal and state legislatures. It excludes elections into local government executive and councillorship positions which the 1999 constitution (as amended) vests in the State Independent Electoral Commissions. By 2007, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had conducted three elections including the 1999 elections supervised by the military; the 2003 elections, which were the first successful elections conducted under civil rule; and the 2007 elections that marked the first civilian transition elections in terms of regime change. Whether these elections were credible, free and fair have remained controversial subjects thereby attracting research attention.

In that vein, this paper appraises the management and outcome of one of these elections, the 2007 general elections. It is argued that effective electoral governance alone does not guarantee good elections, hence a complex variety of social, economic and political variables affect the process, integrity, and outcomes of democratic elections. In other words, good elections are impossible without effective electoral governance, (Mozaffar and Schedler, 2002:6). In line with the foregoing premises, some questions are posed for determination. Firstly, how does elite perception of election as a "do-or-die" affair impact on the process in Nigeria? In what ways does the electoral umpire (INEC) comply with the extant laws that ensure free and fair elections in Nigeria? Thirdly, how did the conduct of the 2007 general elections comply with the rules to achieve the desired goals of free and fair election?

To effectively answer these questions, attention is focused on examining the roles played by different stakeholders in the political process to make the 2007 general elections either a success or failure. A robust background to this study is built around the post-colonial state theory which explains the concatenation between factors of colonialism and indices of electoral mismanagements in Nigeria. The data for the study was generated from the secondary source and content analysis method used for the discussion. The overall objective is to interrogate the variables and assess their causative effects on the conducts of 2007 general elections in Nigeria.

2. Theoretical Framework

The Marxist post colonial state theory forms the framework of analysis for this study. According to *Encyclopedia.Com*, the word, *postcolonial* does not refer simply to the period after colonialism but assumes continuity, in terms of the continued effects of processes initiated during colonialism, as well as discontinuity, in terms of new processes unfolding subsequently. The term *postcolonial* is used here to refer to the study of the attempted transformation, successful and otherwise, of former colonies in the context of changing imperial conditions, (<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3424300742.html>). Alavi (1972:59), explains that "the argument of the postcolonial state theory is premised on the historical specificity of post-colonial societies, a specificity which arises from structural changes brought about by the colonial experience and alignments of classes and by the superstructures of political and administrative institutions which were established in that context, and secondly from radical re-alignments of class forces which have been brought about in the post-colonial situation". He further explains that "if a colony has a weak and underdeveloped indigenous bourgeoisie, it will be unable at the moment of independence to subordinate the relatively highly developed colonial State apparatus through which the Metropolitan power had exercised dominion over it".

This has been the case with most African States including Nigeria. For Ake (1975), the development of the state in Africa remains at a low level of the primitive accumulation with massive intervention of force in the labour process. Consequently, because of the low level of the development of the state, it is unable to mediate the struggles between classes and the struggle within the dominant class. Thus, the struggle to control and the use of state power become warfare. Consequently, power in Nigeria is over-valued and security lies only on getting more and more power. As a result, there is hardly any restraint on the means of acquiring powers or holding it and on using it. Hence, there is political instability because political competition becomes normless and is carried to the extreme, thereby turning political competition into warfare and the political class thus operates in a state of siege, (Ihonvbere, 1989; Schraeder, 2004).

In order to secure their economic interests, the colonial governments discouraged the emergence of a strong indigenous capitalist class. The specific manner in which the colonialists produced the indigenous elite turned the competition for the control of state power into a "do-or-die" affair. This was so because control of state power provided the only access to primitive accumulation of capital. Consequently, the state and its apparatuses and institutions have become the main instruments for the perpetuation of class interests, and for wilful alienation and self-reproduction, Ezirim and Mbah (2015). They further explain that in most post-colonial states such as in Nigeria, because the state is used as an instrument for the acquisition of wealth, the control of the state power becomes highly attractive and dangerously competitive. This is why the struggle for state power is tantamount to warfare in Nigeria, interacting with other dynamics to produce Nigeria's unique brand of warfare politics. To Nigerian politicians, politics now becomes a zero-sum game in which the winner takes it all, and, elections which is the major characteristic of politics, becomes prone to debilitating violence.

3. Nature and Character of the Nigerian State

The way the elites in Nigeria perceive election portrays the nature of the environment in which the 2007 general elections took place. Adejumobi (1991) argues that the evolution and character of the Nigerian state is quite an essential input in understanding the nature and behaviour of Nigerians generally and, political leadership in particular. In the opinion of Dudley (1973) the state, in its evolutionary process, particularly in the colonial era, shaped the outlook and provided the orientation of the indigenous political elites

and citizens. The state in this paper is the entity called Nigeria which came into existence due to colonial contraption. What this signifies was agglomeration of diverse groups of about 250 ethnic origins into an inchoate political union. The assemblage of these amorphous mass – the Igbo, the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba, the Tiv, the Ijaw, the Igala, the Idoma, the Itsekiri, the Nupe, etc, with outstanding disparities in culture, religion, language and forms of political organization precipitated crisis in the subsequent years (Okibe, 2000:33-34). It can therefore be said that the nature and evolution of the Nigeria state occasioned by the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by Lord Lugard was a dubious social contract which created both horizontal and primordial loyalties and set the stage for divisive tendencies among the various ethnic groups that make up the nation. This is because they were not consulted on whether they liked to be joined together nor was the adequacy and workability of the union considered. The after effect is that ever since then; the different ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria had been seeing themselves as strange bedfellows. Associated with this inconvenient political marriage is the crisis of election management in Nigeria which determines the way and manner the political leaderships of the country emerge since after independence. Most of the political elites do not emerge organically; that is, out of due process. Part of the requirements of political leadership is economic viability of the leader. At the dawn of independence, many people became leaders in Nigeria as a result of merely being participants in the nationalist struggle. Such people did not have the economic base and when they acquired power, it was a means to primitive accumulation and not a means of service to the people. Rafiu, et al. (2009) substantiate this fact when they note that after independence, there emerged out of continual conflict with the colonial authority, political leaders whose interests were not to serve but to use the instrument of the state to enrich themselves, the goal that was difficult to prosecute under colonial rule. This orientation and attitude of the elites according to Dudley (1973), was not accidental, nor was it self-generative, but was due to the heterogeneous direction provided by the colonial predators who for their own convenience divided the country into three administrative areas grouped round the major ethnic groups. This, according to him, later created political antagonism among the elites along the cultural divide. Ake (2001) buttresses this further, contending that,

- The nationalist movement was essentially a coalition of disparate groups united by their common grievances against colonial oppression. It was typically a network of nationalities, ethnic groups, and professional groups. But even though they operated against colonial regime, their relationship was never free from tension and conflict. As the prospects for political independence improved, the solidarity of the movement grew weaker and competition between its component units became more intense.

As a result of poverty of mind and pocket, the emergent political elites after independence consolidated their grips on the state and made it the centre of the economy, and for anybody to become wealthy, it has to be at the expense of the state. No wonder then, Animashaun (2010) opines that the crisis of the electoral system is better understood if situated within the context of the nature of the political economy of the Nigerian state. According to him, the Nigerian state plays a dominant role in the national economy and this throws up the state as a primary instrument of accumulation; and as a facilitator of the capitalist development process, the Nigerian state is a major owner of the means of production. In this regard, Jega (2000) notes that as a result of the expanded oil revenues of the early 1970s, the state effectively dominated all aspects of the national political economy.

Nonetheless, many scholars have noted that the character of the Nigerian state encourages clientele politics which according to Huntington (1997) exists “where the state controls opportunities for commerce and a wide range of jobs in the academics, administrative and legal field.” In this context, politics then means more than competition for political power but assumes the character of a desperate struggle “for positions in the bureaucracy or access to those who have influence over government decisions”. This is noted by (Leeds, 1981), in Animashaun (2010). This is more so as the expansion of petroleum production and the resultant increased revenues heightened “the centrality of the state as the locus of the struggle for resources for personal advancement and group security (Joseph, 1991). Therefore, “the state is everywhere and its power appears boundless. There is hardly any aspect of life in which the state does not exercise power and control. That makes the capture of state power singularly important” (Ake, 1996). The state uses election to legitimize power and therefore, every elite is involved. This could explain why during elections in Nigeria, both the elites and the sub-elites work very hard for their party to win at all costs so as to benefit by way of appointments and job opportunities when victory has been won.

The above succinct analyses of the post colonial character of the Nigerian state predispose the elites to perceive politics as “the most lucrative endeavour in Nigeria to the extent that the contest for political office is fierce and the method is brutal. Political post is seen as a job to our political leaders rather than a service to humanity and their fatherland”, (Rafiu, et’ al, 2009). The essence of analyzing the nature of the Nigerian State is to show the historical deformities of both the colonial/ post colonial state which has predisposed the political elites to perceive winning election at all costs as the only way to primitive accumulation of wealth.

4. The Leadership Question in the Management of Nigerian Elections

The success of any organization is dependent on the quality of its leadership. No wonder, Ibrahim and Garuba (2010: 51), are of the view that the success or failure of any electoral commission is not only dependent on the degree of availability of the requisite human, material and infrastructural tools at the disposal of its staff to work, but also on the quality and style of its leadership in terms of competence; capacity, procedural mechanism for decision making and organizational and strategic ability. It is also for this reason that the constitution provides that for a person to be appointed as the Chairman of INEC; he has to be a “person of unquestionable integrity”. This suggests that there is much to the appointment than mere paper qualification. In other words, while a high level of educational qualification is essential for one to be appointed into the leadership position of the Commission, a lot more has to do with qualities which include dynamic leadership (Ibrahim and Garuba, 2010). It therefore implies that the leadership position of Nigeria’s

electoral management body is not an easy one; it is fraught with a lot of challenges and difficulties. Nwosu (2006: 53), a onetime Chairman of the Commission alludes to this leadership problem and observes that:

- It is a difficult position for any Nigerian, no matter ...his/her integrity, no matter his/her formal profession ...you can come with the best of intentions, but circumstances beyond your control may push you if you are not firm into one direction or the other.

The precarious situation requires that “umpires are not to be active participants in partisan politics. It doesn’t make sense” (Nwosu, 2006). This is part of the problems that afflict Nigeria’s electoral process and we will exemplify this with the INEC leadership under Prof Maurice Iwu during the 2007 general elections. Undoubtedly, the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is influenced by several factors. These factors, in the main, consist of interplay among critical stakeholders whose roles contribute to the success or failure of elections. Inclusive in the categorization are the three arms of government (Executive, Legislature and Judiciary); leaders of the various Political Parties, the Party Candidates, Civil Society Organizations, as well as electorates. Each contributes significantly in the success or failure of every election and the 2007 elections were not exception. Therefore, the intervening roles of these institutions and the impact they had on the 2007 general elections require in-depth investigation to underscore their cause-effect relationships. In this vein, attention will be focused on the executive arm of government (Presidency), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and Political Parties.

5. The Roles of Government in the Success or Failure of the 2007 Elections

The rhetoric of President Olusegun Obasanjo during the build up to the 2007 elections offers us an insight into his perception about the election and that was informed by his orientation. As a preamble to the enormity of malpractice that would characterize the 2007 general elections, Obasanjo (2007:7) declared thus: “This election is a do or die affair for me and the PDP. This election is a matter of life and death for the PDP and Nigeria”. In his address during the 35th National Executive Committee meeting of the PDP on Tuesday, November 21, 2006, Obasanjo stated that: “It would be a calamity for Nigeria if the PDP lost the 2007 elections” (Vanguard 23 November, 2007). Another report in *The Guardian* of 3rd July (2007) quoted the president as saying, “No PDP, No Nigeria”. By virtue of the position of Olusegun Obasanjo as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, he was ipso facto; construed as the de facto “General Overseer” of the whole electoral process and therefore his perception, orientation and attitude had much role to play in the overall success or failure of the election.

Obasanjo’s background is no doubt military, having been a soldier all through his life, reaching the highest rank in the military – Major General. Although he retired as a military general and transformed into a civilian politician, his transformation can be described only as cosmetic as he is already formed. His coloured perception of politics and electoral competition largely determined what he did as a political actor throughout his foray into politics. It is contended that what Obasanjo was quoted as saying about the 2007 election depicts his perception of politics and electoral competition as a continuation of warfare by some other means. It is also in consonance with the Machiavellian principle of politics as a power game. By likening politics as warfare as well as a power game, Obasanjo tended naturally to see political opponent groups as not worthy competitors but as enemies to be crushed. That view of politics is therefore a zero-sum game where the winner must necessarily take all; where the values of fairness, competition and moderation are neglected and the rules of the game have little or no relevance, Tenuche (2009). As far as Obasanjo was concerned, winning the election for his party, the PDP was the only thing he was committed to; he was not after a free and fair election. According to Omotosho (2008: viii), “Prior to the conduct of the 2007 federal elections, there was a desperate attempt by the Presidency and the ruling party to use the law and enforcement agencies in very perverse ways, to exclude those they regarded as strong opponents from the electoral process. There were cases of hurriedly assembled panels to investigate individuals and submit findings within very short period. The findings that often appeared biased or predetermined to suit the incumbent government were used to disqualify opponents”. These were actions taken consciously in the belief that they would help to undermine the outcome of the election.

Maurice Iwu in the final Report of INEC on the 2007 elections notes that “a major and unprecedented political crisis in which a ruling party split with an incumbent Vice President contesting for the Presidency under another party platform threw up not only a heavy political dust but also serious constitutional question. The legal tussle that emanated from this unprecedented development was not resolved till five days to the presidential election. The commission was compelled to print a new set of ballot papers for the presidential election which arrived in Nigeria only hours to the commencement of polls and had to be distributed to the more than 120,000 polling units located in 8,800 wards of the country, some of them located in extremely difficult terrains”, (Iwu, 2008). What the foregoing disclosures show is that the 2007 elections were conducted under a polluted and dubious political atmosphere in which widespread skepticism about government’s commitment to the process was rife; a disposition largely informed by the row over “third term agenda”.

Prior to the 2007 general elections, the president and some state governors repeatedly tried to change the Constitution to prolong their stay in office but failed. This was despite the fact that the Nigeria Constitution only allows a two-term limit on the president and the state governors. In addition, the political crisis involving the president and his deputy due to the unrestrained interests of one, to install a surrogate as president in Aso Rock, and the other, to become the president himself at the expiration of Obasanjo’s tenure, watered the grounds to experiment all manners of intrigues and therefore truncate free and fair electoral process. As a result of the convulsing atmosphere, the run-up to the 2007 general elections was not only very acrimonious but indicative of the resolve of political elites to corrupt the electoral process, defame INEC and retard democratic consolidation in the country. The Crisis Group (2007: 2) remarks that Obasanjo’s motivation was partly a genuine desire to sustain the reforms introduced by his administration since 1999 but it was a wrong assumption that only he can ensure the consolidation of those reforms. In order to achieve his aim, he tried to undermine the opposition with the aid of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), when his third term bid failed.

According to the Crisis Group (2007: 4), “the EFCC has played a highly controversial role in the disqualification of several politicians from contesting the election. First, it forwarded to the presidency a list of 135 persons it claimed to have “indicted” for various financial crimes and corruption. Sequel to this, the government constituted an Administrative Panel of Enquiry on 7 February 2007, and ordered all those on the EFCC list to appear before it within two days. By 13 February, the panel had completed its investigation of all cases, and a White Paper drafted and adopted by the government, barring 37 of those “indicted” by the EFCC from contesting the elections. Those affected included Atiku Abubakar, presidential candidate of Action Congress (AC), and Abia State Governor, Orji Uzor Kalu, presidential candidate of the Progressive Peoples’ Alliance (PPA)”.

In the report, the EFCC claims that the list it submitted to the president had as many PDP candidates as those of other parties but the PDP figures were politicians whose electoral fortunes were of little consequence to the overall electoral fortunes of the party. The names of those in opposition included a number of key figures among which were presidential and governorship candidates. The submission of the list to the president by EFCC was widely criticized as constituting violation of its powers, which are limited to investigating and prosecuting economic crimes in the courts. Similarly, the setting up of an administrative panel by government to investigate over 100 cases in two days was widely seen as crude attempts at eliminating specific opponents. These acts gravely undermined public confidence in the electoral process and raised serious questions about the anti-corruption campaign as a mechanism to restrict participation in the election. It deserted the rules of electoral competition which remains the beauty of party politics and foisted one party mentality in the polity. Fawehinmi (2007) corroborates this and notes that:

- Since the PDP kicked off its presidential campaign on January 27th, 2007, General Obasanjo has turned the entire exercise to Obasanjo presidential campaign. He has failed dismally to draw a line between official presidential duties and the electoral campaign for a presidential candidate of his party, the PDP. He has virtually put Governor Musa Yar’Adua in his pocket like an Australian Kangaroo, using presidential jets, presidential security, presidential financial vote and all other paraphernalia of presidential authority to conduct the elections.

Obasanjo’s attitude, actions and utterances, no doubt impacted negatively on the 2007 elections. Ehusani (2007) lent credence to the unrestrained absurdity and posits that they have made us a laughing stock in the eyes of the civilized world, these rogues, these gangsters, and these warlords in the corridors of power. They have stolen the people’s mandate and aborted their collective dream of a land of peace, security and prosperity, these bandits, these criminals, these usurpers of the people’s commonwealth. These are people the London Economist recently referred to as “rotten leaders,” who have trampled on all truth and desecrated all decency, leaving the people in shock and angry desperation. From Abia to Zamfara, and from Ekiti to Ebonyi, the evil genius has conspired to rob the people of their right to self-determination and their aspiration for self-actualization, and sowed the seed of discord, anarchy and doom”. For Tenuche (2007), “That Chief Obasanjo ended up presiding over a monumentally rigged kind of elections was thus not surprising. The problem inherent therein is not just in the contradiction between his being the president of all and the leader of a ruling party but more importantly in his para-militarized approach to and zero-sum conception of politics generally and electoral competition”.

The above discussion has proved that the roles of the leadership regime, in this case, the presidency led by President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, impacted significantly, albeit negatively on the 2007 general elections. However, the full consequences of these roles would be appreciated when the complicity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is examined. In other words, how did INEC treat Obasanjo’s meddlesome roles and what actions were taken to mitigate the effects on the election management and the outcome?

6. The Roles of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the Success or Failure of 2007 Elections

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the institution that is charged with the responsibility of conducting elections into political offices, among other activities in Nigeria’s electoral process. The executive appoints the leadership of INEC, the Chairman and the National Commissioners as well as the Resident Electoral Commissioners who are in charge of INEC at the State levels. The executive also provides the funds with which INEC execute the electoral processes. Though appointed by the executive, the Constitution provides that the institution is independent; meaning that national interest consistent with the intent of each national election should be its primary concern. Regardless of this provision however, the way and manner INEC had conducted elections in Nigeria are immersed in controversy. This paper therefore shows how INEC had overtly and covertly subverted public expectation for free, fair and credible elections and served personal and group interests during the 2007 elections. It also shows the implications of the appointment of INEC leadership by the executive with regard to insulating the institution from partisan interest and political neutrality. This explains why the leaderships easily bend to executive pressure.

The leadership of INEC is embodied in the person and office of the Chairman of the Commission, who serves as the overall head of the institution. The popular position is that except for one or two occasions, the commission has not been led by men of solid principles and character, (Akinlotan,2007). It is reported that while it is difficult to assess the Commission’s leadership using collective or personal variables, experience has shown that the leadership of the Commission usually hobnobs with any government in power. In most instances, the leadership is personalized at the level of personal relation as opposed to institutional work culture. The leadership is not collective, but is tailored along the highly dictatorial political society and its culture as the president exerts influence over the INEC Chairman, who in turn influences the Resident Electoral Commissioners and Local Government Electoral Officers, (Ibrahim and Garuba, 2010). This shows that the INEC Chairman is the person that is responsible for major decisions in INEC even if he gets the supportive role of subordinates. It is also established that the INEC leadership is responsible to the president of the country who appointed them.

During the 2007 elections, Prof Maurice Iwu was the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission and Chief Electoral Officer of the federation. It was believed that all major decisions were taken by him and all accolades and all blames in the performance of the Commission also credited to him. In consonance, his leadership generated much questions than answers in the manner the institution was used to promote selfish goals and aspirations. According to Ibrahim and Garuba (2010:53), it was alleged that the utterances of the INEC Chairman, Professor Iwu, was the “thinking” and “arrogance” of President Olusegun Obasanjo who appointed him”. They also noted that:

- As the election got nearer, Iwu did not only find himself in the camp of former president Obasanjo who had declared the 2007 elections a “do-or-die” affairs, he also became more and more difficult to be reached by those to whom he vowed to deliver a legacy of credible elections arrangement. Some Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECS), especially those who did not agree much with him were not left out in this isolation over-communication. It was even reported in the press that he asked those RECs who are not prepared to serve as instructed to resign their positions.

In reference to Iwu’s roles in compliance with the bidding of President Olusegun Obasanjo in the 2007 elections, Abel Guobadia as reported in Ibrahim and Garuba (2010:51) stressed that the problem with INEC stems from the appointment of “errand boys” into the Commission – implying that Professor Iwu was an errand boy to the Obasanjo administration. But looked at from the same lenses, Guobadia who was the Chairman of INEC that conducted the sham elections of 2003 would also personify as an “errand boy” to the same Obasanjo. In essence, the incident of INEC’s leadership to go along with any government in power against the wishes of the Nigerian people, whom it is supposed to serve, often involved some degree of arrogance (Ibrahim and Garuba, 2010:53). The traits of arrogance in the 2003 and 2007 elections respectfully singled out Dr. Abel Guobadia and Professor Iwu as bad examples in the leadership of the institution. The sinister and hasty manner in which Dr. Guobadia and the PDP “victors” in the 2003 elections referred aggrieved parties to the elections tribunals to seek redress, the boastful and arrogant manner with which Professor Iwu went about his duty to the Nigerian People portrayed them in a bad light. Akinlotan (2007:56) observes that Iwu could not have done any better than the worst record of election administration he presented, arguing that “the man talks too much and he is quite incapable of applying his energies in the right direction.”

Describing the INEC chairman and his roles during the 2007 election, the NDI (2007:59) in its reports of Domestic Observers on the April 21, 2007 election indicate that “throughout the period leading to the elections, INEC chairman, Professor Maurice Iwu, was more preoccupied with making political statements and fighting political battles, which distracted him from the task of ensuring that arrangements were put in place to generate a smooth electoral process. He failed to appreciate the importance of his assignment and was unable to approach it with dignity and decorum. He presented himself as a man who knew all the answers and covered his inadequacies with unnecessary bravado. Most importantly, he adopted an adversarial, rather than a cooperative role with civil society organizations, and this diminished his credibility and INEC’s capacity to conduct transparent elections”. This shows that the leadership of INEC by Prof Maurice Iwu ignored all extant laws guiding the conduct of free and fair elections, to do the bidding of President Olusegun Obasanjo and deliver the PDP at all odds in the 2007 elections. The connivance compromised the electoral process and exposed the system to systemic fragility that irked both local and international community to suspect Nigeria’s prospect in the practice of democracy and the use of election as mechanism for leadership succession in the country.

7. The Roles of Political Parties in the Success or Failure of 2007 Elections

Ibrahim and Garuba (2010:61) note that political parties have become veritable instruments of democracy and governance. They are sources of political identity and channels of control of political leaders.... Constitutionally, nobody contests any election in Nigeria except under a political party”. Therefore, it goes without saying that INEC conducts elections for the people to choose from candidates presented by different political parties. Elections in Nigeria can equally be said to be a contest between and among political parties. For this reason, the 2007 general elections had 50 registered political parties by INEC to participate in the elections; out of which only five political parties nominated Presidential candidates. The parties played significant roles to determine the nature and character of the elections. Unfortunately, Nigeria is a country where the “... Politicians go to any extent, legitimate or otherwise, to achieve power, and/or remain in power. In the process, they encounter opposition from those who desire to get access to power. A tug-of-war ensues and results in situations where the: (a) incumbents patronize state resources to institute reprisal against anti-incumbency elements (b) opposition become victims of incumbent reprisals (c) the incumbent support friendly elements or cronies “new breed” to take over power; the latter is ensured through electoral malpractice” (Tar and Shettima, 2010:135).

The end result of this tug-of-war is usually electoral violence all over the place. The 2007 elections were characterized by these manipulative intrigues. Iwu (2008) in the course of the elections in 2007 vehemently accused the political elites generally and their conducts in the 2007 election specifically for exhibiting the tendency to breach due process. According to him, “elections in Nigeria have consistently been made tedious over the years more by the unruly disposition and activities of the political class than any other identifiable factor. A high level of indiscipline and disorder has pervaded the nation’s politics for so long, crystallizing in a culture of in cohesion”. He further asserts that one of the most grievous features of contemporary politics and the conduct of politics in the Nigerian environment has been the absence of order. Within the political parties, among competing entities and instructively even in individual tendencies, priorities and articulation of goals, order seems presently to be in abeyance” (Iwu, 2008).

There was absence of internal democracy within virtually all the 50 registered political parties. Adejumobi (2007:2) emphasized this lacuna, and contends that “party leaders constituted themselves into a cabal of political barons who disregarded the result of party primaries and unilaterally anointed the party candidates for the general elections”. And during that phase of the subversion of the people’s will, INEC could not invoke its authorities. The nomination of party candidates was characterized by a process of selection rather than election, and sometimes, party primaries took place outside clear democratic rules. This resulted in a number of court cases

involving politicians who won nominations at internal party primaries, but had their names substituted with other names by their political parties (Ibrahim and Garuba, 2010:62). Amechi and Omehia of Rivers State are reference points in this regard. They were both PDP governorship candidates, but Amechi was substituted for Omehia by the PDP leadership. The former challenged his removal as the party's candidate before the Federal High Court, and eventually, the apex court of the land, (i.e. Supreme Court of Nigeria) finally returned him as the Governor of Rivers State."

The Final Report of the National Democratic Institute, (NDI, 2007: 22) discussed how intense competition and allegations of manipulation characterized primaries held to select gubernatorial candidates in many states. PDP leaders in Lagos State rejected the victory of its female aspirant, Hilda Williams in the primary elections. Within the ruling AD, 11 of its gubernatorial candidates quit the party to protest the imposition by then-Governor Bola Tinubu of his preferred candidate, Mr. Babatunde Fashola. The AD Deputy Governor, Femi Pedro, left the party as well, and was subsequently chosen as the candidate of Labour Party (LP). The report further claimed that in Imo State, PDP Senator Ifeanyi Ararume won the gubernatorial primaries but was rejected by the party, which instead put forward Charles Ugwu who had come in fourteenth place in the primary as its candidate. Ararume successfully challenged this in court, but the party refused to implement the Supreme Court's ruling, opting instead not to present any candidate for the State's Governorship election. The records show that as many as 75 percent of Nigeria's incumbent national legislators did not secure their party's nomination for re-election (NDI, 2007: 23). Some PDP watchers asserted that suspicions of party disloyalty disadvantaged many incumbents, particularly those who failed to support President Obasanjo in his proposed constitutional amendment to make way for third term in office and bolster his political aspiration. When it was certain that Obasanjo would exit, he made sure that many of the legislators who collapsed his ambition were not selected again by the ruling party, the PDP.

The foregoing has demonstrated that within the parties, there was no discipline, and the party leaders had no regard for due democratic principles as they did not observe the principles of free and fair party nomination of candidates. Without internal democracy in the parties' primary elections, the electoral umpire would be exposed to myriads of problems. This includes the tendency by the parties to export the malpractice perpetrated during the party primaries to the conduct of actual elections, and employ all manner of intrigues to infect the electoral process with irregularities and compromise neutrality in the conduct of INEC officials. In such instance, parties are prone to behave in very perverse ways in the main elections. These were the burden INEC shouldered during the 2007 general elections and therefore could not perform miracles. Although INEC had its own shortcomings that betrayed the confidence reposed in the institution by the Nigerian public and the global community, a follow up investigation shows that systemic vices contributed immensely in conditioning its operations. Some members of the Commission were coerced or manipulated to bow to the Nigerian election mania based on the prevailing political climate in Nigeria during the time in question. The International Crisis Group (ICG, 2007: 7) berated the behavioural and attitudinal disposition of the political class in the conduct of the 2007 elections. The group in an appraisal of the election noted that in general terms:

- Both the ruling PDP and opposition parties have failed the democracy test.' This was amply reflected in reports from different parts of the country during the November – December 2006 party conventions, which were characterized by parallel congresses, duplicate polls, outright boycotts, willful refusal to send election materials to those believed to be in rival camps, subversion of established procedures, preferential distribution of party membership cards, allegations of delegate bribery and shameless bias.

In the different political parties in Nigeria, there was evidence during the build up to the 2007 elections that "there is not yet a culture of intra-party competition" and as a PDP leader told the International Crisis Group (2007: 9), "the hand picking, imposition and installation of candidates is a perversion of procedures, "rigging in the upstream sector of the electoral system". This created bad blood within the parties and aggravated intra-party violence significantly, especially when the imposed candidate does not really represent member's wishes". The implication of this scenario, which the International Crisis Group (2007: 9) notes, is that "the imposition on the electorate of handpicked leaders who emerge through a flawed system can only produce governments whose legitimacy will be widely questioned at the expenses of national stability". The imposition is traced to the handiwork of select political clique labeled as god-fathers. The International Crisis Group (2007: 9) maintains that "as in 2003, there remains the influence of "godfathers", political merchants who sponsor candidates on the understanding that this will bring huge returns once the candidate takes office". Many of them sponsored candidates in the 2007 elections and they had to confront each other in the field wanting to win at all cost. The effect was a vicious spiral of electoral violence and rigging to get what they wanted, thereby impacting negatively on the 2007 elections.

As a matter of fact, most Nigerian politicians do not see elections merely as a competition in which the better candidate wins. They rather see election as a matter of do or die and as a battle that must be won at all cost. That is why Ibrahim and Garuba (2010: 20) remark: "Elections in the Country are characterized by rampant violence in which party barons and godfathers contest against each other in an orgy of violence and political assassinations". According to them, "political parties operate like the mafia. In understanding the characteristics of mafia style gangsterism in Nigerian politics, many political parties are essentially operated by political godfathers who use money and violence to control the political process. They decide on party nominations and campaign outcomes, and when candidates try to steer an independent course, they are dealt with. The result is that they raise the level of electoral violence and make free and fair elections difficult". Ibrahim and Garuba (2010: 23) quoting Abel Guobadia, former INEC Chairman on the nature of political parties maintain as follows:

- Nigerian Political Parties behave like war machines cocked almost permanently to go into combat with perceived opponents, both existing and potential. More often than not, the enemy is not just the opposition party but also the electorates who refuse to toe the party line. Once in power, the parties want to remain there forever by hook by crook, intolerant to challenges, either from within or from without.

This is aggravated by lack of cohesion within each of the parties. It consequently degenerates into intra-party factions that spillover into elections, with each faction presenting different candidates (Kurfi 2003: 15). The reasons are obvious – lack of party ideology. Chukwuemeka Ezeife, former Special Adviser to ex-president Obasanjo on Political Matters and a chieftain of AD was emphatic on this point when he remarked that,

- From the beginning, we had wanted ideological parties. That opportunity was ruined. We now go for wining, wining only. No more ideology. We are playing (the) survival game. Our preferences for the use of ideology to unite Nigerians and present them with clear democratic choice did not work (Ezeife, 1998:7).

He further added that: “unless parties are formed based on ideology, no party can be better than a group of armed robbers who have agreed on how to share loot”. On the same lack of ideology, Izuogu (2002: 6) share similar views, that the political parties and indeed, the leading ones – PDP, ANPP, AC – are military contraptions without any ideological content. The PDP is a marriage of strange quarrelsome bedfellows who do not only misunderstand themselves but are also regularly feuding. ANPP is virtually moribund, while AC is split into two contentious camps”. Similarly, Audu Ogbe a former Chairman of the PDP admits that, “...the biggest problem confronting PDP is that the party is yet to become a political party. It is more a rally. The biggest tragedy in PDP is gross indiscipline where individuals mistake democracy for anarchy” (Ogbe, 2002:6). As a result of the attitudinal and behavioural dispositions of the Nigerian political elites, an attitude of “do-or-die”, “win at all cost”, politicians sponsor political thugs to disrupt polling on election days.

The final report on the 2007 elections from the European Union Election Observation and Monitoring Group (EUEOMG, 2007: 34) indicates that during Election Day, disruptions, sometimes violent, of the polling and the counting process by groups of thugs were observed in several states. For example, in Anambra State, election materials were hijacked at two polling stations. EU observers witnessed assault on polling stations by thugs in Ondo State, the stealing and burning of a ballot box by armed young men during voting in Gombe State and were informed by presiding officers and domestic observers about ballot boxes and papers having been snatched by armed youths in three polling stations in Kastina State. Observers witnessed thugs stealing and destroying official ward collection result forms in front of the INEC office of the Local Government Area Lafia of Nassarawa State. The report also stated incidences of clashes between supporters of rival political parties during polling which invariably resulted in violence of several dimensions as summarized below:

“Riots broke out in a number of places, mostly between supporters of different parties, sometimes during voting hours and sometimes after the announcement of results in favour of the ruling party. For example, the riots were reported in Ilesha, Osagbo and Boripe Local Government Areas of Osun State, in Bende Local Government Area of Abia State, in several Local Government Areas in Cross River State, in Borogo Local Government Areas of Bauchi State and in two Local Government Areas in Kaduna State, leading to the cancellation of results. Clashes between supporters of two candidates in Kaduna South Local Government Area resulted in elections being cancelled in two polling stations. In Anambra State, seven INEC offices at Local Government Area level were burnt down by crowds turning violent in reaction to the chaos of the election administration. There were several activities of the political class reported in the 2007 elections which significantly affected the outcome of the elections. For instance, the EUEOMG (2007: 36) final report further observed that in Enugu State, unidentified persons, driving a state government car, targeted the transporting of polling materials to polling stations and stole the sensitive materials.

The report also indicates that in 13 per cents of polling stations visited, attempts were made to influence voters, mainly by party agents. In Ebonyi and Oyo States, EU observers saw voters being directed for whom to vote and in Borno State in a polling station with only female voters the agent of the state ruling party intimidated women to vote for his party. In Cross River State, a PDP agent collected ballot papers from the table of the presiding officer, checked the mark and inserted them then into the ballot box, while in collation centers in Enugu and Ebonyi States, PDP agents assumed a leading role in the counting process. In Ebonyi State, EU observers witnessed harassment of voters by PDP agents”. The behavioural and attitudinal disposition of the political class bred violence during the 2007 election thereby impacting negatively on the election. The NDI (2007: 25) Final Report on the 2007 election observed that politically motivated violence created an environment in which voters could not make choices free from fear of retribution; it undermined the right of people to campaign for their preferred candidates and impeded the right to stand for election. It also noted that in the lead up to the 2007 elections, acts of violence were committed by supporters of competing factions within political parties, particularly during contests for party nominations and against members of rival parties in the general elections. These included: assassinations of candidates for party nominations and for the general elections, armed attacks against campaign meetings and rallies; threats against potential voters to influence their choice at the ballot box; and attacks against polling stations, polling officials and rival agents (NDI, 2007: 25).

Reports by Nigerian sources, IFES, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, the International Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch cited as many as 280 election-related deaths and many more injuries in the six months leading up to the April 2007 elections. NDI noted that though incidents of violence did not occur in all of the country’s 36 states, the frequency and brazen nature of repeated incidents affected the political atmosphere at the national level. The International Crisis Group (ICG, 2007: 10) notes that “since the 2003 elections, there has been a rise in the kidnapping of opponents, assassination of would-be candidates and other political figures, and violent disruption of political meetings and campaigns of rivals. These acts occur both between and within parties, and seem to be increasing in frequency as the elections drew closer... The killing of opponents began to surge in early 2004 after a brief lull following the 2003 elections. Among the most notable ones are presented in the table below:

Date	Name of Victim	Portfolio	Incident
February 14, 2004	Aminasoari Dikkibo	National Vice Chairman in the South-South Zone	Shot and killed while travelling in Delta State
3rd March 2004	Andrew Agom and Joseph Ngama	Member, PDP Board of Trustees, and a Police Sergeant	Killed when the convoy of George Akume, Governor of Benue State, was attacked on the way to Abuja. The Governor escaped unhurt.
March 4, 2004	Luke Shigaba	Local Government Chairmanship candidate in Kogi State	Killed at his residence at Oguma, Bassa Local Government.
7 March, 2004	Philip Olorunnipa	Commissioner of the Kogi State Independent Electoral Commission (SEIC)	Murdered in his residence in Kabbi, Kogi State
5 February 2005	Sunday Atte	Leader of the Legislative Council in Yagba East LGA of Kogi State	Killed by gunmen
3 June 2005	Patrick Origbe	PDP member and Principal Administrative Officer of Ovwie Local Government Area of Delta State	Shot dead
27 July 2005	Anthony Ozioko	PDP Assistant National Director of Research and Planning	Shot dead at his residence in Saburi-Gwagwa, Abuja
August 2005	Felix Eboigbe	Councilor in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State	Killed by gunmen in Benin City, a few hours after he indicated his intention to stand for chairmanship of the council in 2007
25 December 2005,	Jackson Edema	Chairman of Warri South Local Government Area	Shot dead
May 22, 2006	Boluwaji Kunlere	PDP secretary in Ondo State	Suspected assassins attacked his home in Akure; they missed him but seriously wounded his wife Elizabeth
30 June 2006	Jesse Aruku	ACF Gubernatorial candidate	Abducted and killed near his house in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State
27 July 2006	Funsho Williams	PDP Gubernatorial candidate in Lagos State	Murdered in his bedroom at Dolphin Estate, Lagos.
14 August 2006	Ayodeji Daramola	PDP Gubernatorial candidate	Killed at home at Ijan-Ekiti, Ekiti State

Table 1: List of victims of political violence and assassinations prior to 2007 general elections in Nigeria

Source: Compilations from the Final Reports of International Crisis Group (2007:10)

The table above shows the level of electoral violence in Nigeria prior to the 2007 general elections. The spates of violence were perpetrated in order to ensure that perceived rivals were removed out of the way. The implication is that the contests were not violent free. The only reason for all these acts of violence is that most of the politicians see election as a do-or-die affair in which everything including the shedding of opponent's blood must be done to root out opponents. It is as a result of the behavioural and attitudinal dispositions of Nigerian politicians that elections are perceived as risky business that preclude peaceful atmosphere and conducive environment where choices among competing interests are freely made and the outcome respected. The implication is that many Nigerians loathe participation in election, thereby increasing the rate of apathy and opportunities for rigging.

8. Conclusion

Perception and attitude go a long way to determine the behavior of individuals. Going by the understanding of most Nigerian politicians that election is a do- or- die affair; a contest they must win at all costs in order to remain in power or to snatch power from those holding in and thereby enjoy the spoils of office, they go all out to do everything possible to win election. There are no way elections in Nigeria can be free and fair in so far as the elites perceive election as warfare.

It is therefore recommended that Nigerian political elites should see election in the light of what it is, a contest; and in a contest, one person must win while the other must lose, two persons cannot win the same contest at the same time.

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